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A WEBCT COURSE TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR A EUROPEAN FIELD STUDY

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Successful international field study experiences require that students be thoroughly prepared for what they will encounter. To prepare 32 students from six universities participating in a two-week tour of the fashion industry and culture of London, Paris and Florence, we developed a WebCT-based course that all students could access using the Internet. Three credits were awarded for the WebCT course and two-week experience.

Advantages and Content of the WebCT Course

We have developed a WebCT course for the European field study because it offers advantages of the Internet and course management tools that facilitate communication with students across the United States in preparing them for the experience. For example, the Internet component of WebCT allows students scattered across the U.S. to access the syllabus, course assignments and requirements, and course content via a web site rather than mailing information to each student.

We developed a course module on essential information such as what to pack, safety tips, what to expect on the transatlantic flight and while touring abroad (e.g., tipping, the phone systems, weather). Additionally, we developed parallel course modules for the three countries that will be visited. These modules consisted mainly of easy to access hyperlinks that contain a variety of information on geographic location; country history; eating habits and culinary traditions; the economy, currency and exchange; state of the textile and apparel industries; orientations to city districts and attractions; public transit systems; and language basics. Information and images collected during past study tours introduced sections within the module.

WebCT course management tools eliminate some of the instructor's grading and accounting processes. For instance, automatically scored quizzes on content will be used for grading and for monitoring the minimum score requirements on quizzes needed before the student may access other sections of a module. Students will also have direct access to their grades, will be able to submit assignments, and communicate with the instructor via email.

Effectiveness and Future Plans

Effectiveness of the WebCT course will be determined through anonymous course evaluations as part of the WebCT course. The results of these student evaluations will be available to the instructor once grades are submitted in mid-August. Talking with students, we surmise that allowing students to repeat the quizzes until they received a passing score may lead to some students guessing until they obtained the correct answer. To curtail this, we will continue to add to the bank of questions drawn upon to create the randomly generated set of



questions for each student's quiz. A larger bank of questions will decrease the "naïve process of elimination" method of obtaining a passing score.